EDITORIAL SECTION

POLITICS. ART. SCIENCE. LITERATURE.

TO MAKE NEW YORK THE MOST PERFECT CITY in the WORLD:

A Stronger Local Government

By Comptroller Bird S. Coler

NOT many additional laws are necessary to perfect the scheme of government for the consolidated city of New York, but certain constitutional changes in the financial system should be obtained with as little delay as possible in order that the proper development of the great municipality may not be retarded. A city cannot stand still. It must go forward or backward, and laws that check or retard progress should be changed. The credit of the city is so high that it may be considered as unlimited so long as honest government obtains, but that credit is merely a matter of local pride or sentiment if it is rendered useless for practical purposes.

The constitutional restrictions upon the borrowing capacity of the city should be so modified that the debts existing and to be incurred in future could be arranged upon a business basis.

The municipalities that were added to the former city of New York on January 1, 1898, had, with few exceptions, exhausted or exceeded their borrowing capacity. As a result the debt of the city was doubled, while its assets were increased only one-fourth. That compelled the consolidated city to begin business without capital that could be utilized because of constitutional limitations on the amount of money that could be borrowed. This condition of affairs compelled a practical cessation of public improvements until valuations increased. Some relief has been afforded by the constitutional amendment, approved at the last election, which separates the debts of the counties from that of the city. Additional relief is necessary, however, if the great city of New York is to fulfil its manifest destiny and continue a rich, progressive and independent municipality, the highest ideal of true democracy. Therefore ample power to make progress safely and surely along the lines of a broad and liberal development of natural resources is the only legislation essential to the complete success of consolidation.

Amend the Constitution.

In a private business an investment that yields a profitable revenue is never classified as a debt. The same system should apply to the bus ness affairs of a city.

The water works owned by New York yield sufficient return to pay interest on their cost and to create a sinking fund that will retire the bonds as they fall due. The system is therefore a profitable investment and not a liability. The same is true of the dock property owned by the city. Many of the piers return enough revenue to pay interest on their cost and to create a sinking fund that will retire the bonds in less than twenty years from date of issue. The average interest charge on dock bonds is three and one-quarter per cent, while the modern piers pay to the city more than seven per cent on their cost. There is no sound business reason why such profitable investments should be carried upon the books of the city as debt and a charge against the credit of the municipality. With a change in the constitutional restrictions upon the city debt limit the investment in piers could be extended with profit until the finest system of wharves and the greatest facilities for shipping of any port in the world were provided. This would greatly benefit the commercial interests of New York, and the investment would be so safe and profitable that the city would in thirty years or a little more own the entire water front and improvements, a property that would then yield an enormous revenue.

The same plan of finance, if permissive legislation can be obtained, may be safely applied to the construction of a complete system of rapid transit which should include subways for commercial purposes. The laws that regulate the financial affairs of the city should recognize the fact that an obligation of which neither principal nor interest is to be paid finally from the proceeds of taxation is not properly a charge against the credit or borrowing capacity of the corporation. Water front improvements, water works and rapid transit are investments of the funds of the municipality where the property created is pledged to return principal and interest, and therefore the initial outlay is not a charge upon the general revenue of the city and should not be classed as a debt.

Business Methods Needed.

This view of the financial system must in the end prevail, no matter how much opposition it may arouse among ultra-conservative students of municipal affairs, because the great city of New York cannot be long confined within narrow limits of progress and development. The corporation has the moral right and the material power to retain and develop for the general good the franchises and properties that are the heritage of the people, and the legal right must sooner or later be granted by the people of the State. It is essentially a part of our system of government that the people of the city, having certain general property rights conveyed to them by the creation of the municipality, should retain them and should have the power to develop them without yielding any part to private capital or interests.

De Tocqueville, writing fifty years ago an introduction to his great work on "Democracy in America," asked: "Can it be believed that the democracy, which has overthrown the feudal system and vanquished kings, will retreat before tradesmen and capitalists? Will it stop now that it is grown so strong and its adversaries so weak?"

These questions are especially applicable to municipal conditions in New York at this time. Great private interests and aggregations of capital seek to obtain interests that are the property of the city and should remain for ever free of private control. A city that is a triumph of applied democracy cannot afford to retreat one step. A concession, no matter how trifling, in the matter of ownership and control of water supply, or any other franchise for a public right and necessity, would be a serious step backward. Therefore the city must retain all that it owns, and should have the legal right to develop all profitable investments without needless restraint. In a word, the full power to make progress is the only legislation of vital importance that is required by the city of New York.

New York's Religious Life

By Gen. Ballington Booth

HOW can we improve the religious conditions of New York and other great cities?

This is indeed a broad subject and covers much ground.

Being a strong friend of the churches, and rep-nting a movement (the Volunteers of rica) that is an auxiliary to the churches, I not speak plainly without charge of laint or severity?

I shall assume that it is an undisputed and a therefore recognized fact that the great mass of people not only do not attend church, but have little regard for a Christian sanctuary. Even supposing the people of New York City to be wholly religiously inclined, it will be at once conceded that a church accommodation of five hundred thousand (500,000) is far inadequate for a residential population of nearly three millions (3,000,000). I shall also assume that a large portion of the people of this city and other cities are ignorant of the principles of Christianity, many of them not so much as coming into touch with Christian influences or associations. Such being the case, the question naturally arises: "What is the best method of improving the religious conditions of the people?"

Courage in Christianity.

I. First and foremost, let us resolve that we will set a higher premium upon the presence and work of Christianity. All civilized nations will un te in acknowledging the superiority of Christian principles in purifying society, inculcating morality, creating righteous laws and bringing in its train to the people dignity, honor and virtue. It crushes the heel of tyranny; it breaks the shackles of slavery; it opens the ballot box to all men and teaches the doctrine of brotherhood, that we are our "brother's keeper."

Go where you will in the march of Christianity, and you find that simultaneously with the sword of justice has come the torch of freedom, and whether it has been a Tyre or a Sidon, a Sodom or a Gomorrah, a Babylon or a Pompeii, with the decay of the worship of and reverence for God has come the downfall of its destiny and power.

Then whence this morbid fear to speak of religion on the exchange, behind the counter, in the factory or in the company of the ungodly? No wonder the world thinks light of religion! The question is asked: "Why do not the people accept religion?" The world will attach a higher value to Christian ty just so soon, and not a whit sooner, than it sees professed Christians advocate and defend its principles. Where the cynical, sceptical worldling finds the representatives of Christianity, whether it be on a justice's bench, in a merchant's store or among the gathering throng, true to their faith and principles, he comes to respect it; but where he finds it a Sabbath day garb, worn but in the sanctuary, he learns to discard and despise it. Do any affirm, "Its place is in the church," I say unhesitat ngly there is no place where Christianity should not go.

Religion on Week Days.

It will be inexorably found that that place or institution to which the principles of Christianity are foreign is wrong! Let us then urge our young men and young women to become strong, heroic and steadfast in protecting and advocating Christianity *out in the world* as well as *in the church*.

II. In God's name and that of our neglected fellow citizens, stop taking the church from the vicinity of the poor and working people. The tendency of the twentieth century city is to remove the church to the more refined and *aristocratic* sections, leaving the darker, needier neighborhoods to neglect and want. Is not this reversing the principles embodied in the teaching of Our Lord, and taking light from darkness, the salt from where its savor is most needed, and the good Samaritans from those fallen among thieves?

It surely cannot be argued that earnest, aggressive church effort wont be appreciated by the average poor and wage-earner. Why, the fact that over one million nine hundred and sixty thousand persons have been attracted inside of our simple Volunteer halls during the past year alone in our large cities is proof of their read ness to visit a warm, zealous and sympathetic service.

III. Institute some organized and consecutive use of the latent talent in the Christian churches.

With others I lament the great waste of the talents and gifts which are God-given, and which should be man-given, but which are unrecognized and in many instances undiscovered in our churches throughout the land.

Why should we not press this superb and needed talent into the active service of the churches?

IV. The incorporation of a purer and more vital gospel into our addresses and sermons.

Preach the story of redemption in the pulpit. It is the most fascinating, alleviating and convincing of all stories. It is an old truth, with constantly new and pungent power. No doctrine so wins men as that of Calvary. No gospel so comforts and cheers, whether from the pulpit, the platform, at the hearthstone or the bedside, as this theme of the cross. Like the strings of a harp, it rests the weary with its tender music, and yet like the bugle its clear, ringing blasts stir the flagging columns again to battle. Let it come out loud, distinct, strong, "Christ, our Lord, died as a sacrifice and lives as a saviour of the masses."

Preach the Gospel.

BALLINGTON BOOTH.

To Improve Our Public Works

By Ex-Mayor Thomas F. Gilroy

NO one who has not thoroughly studied the subject can appreciate the importance of public improvements on the well-being of the city at large.

This subject bears on the comfort of the individual, whether he be a laborer onaire, more closely than anything ected with the progress or develop-he city. Manifestly the most impor-rovement is bound up in the question apid trans.t. To make intercommunica-between the upper and lower parts of the city more rapid contains the essence of development of the Greater New York. For twenty years the development of the upper part of the city has been retarded by the absence of adequate rapid transit. The building of the tunnel road will mean not alone that the people who live in the upper part of the cit, may get to their homes more quickly, but it will mean a more equable distribution of t. burden of taxation. This will be made apparent to any one who studies the increase in real estate valuation brought about by the construction of the elevated railroad. In fifteen years this enterprise has added to the taxable value of real estate over $200,000,000. If this can be done by such a totally inadequate provision for transit as is provided by the elevated railroads, think what the result must be if we could have real rapid transit to the city line—such rapid transit as an underground system would provide.

As matters stand to-day, more than one-half of the available area of the city is not built upon. This is due largely to the fact that the people cannot get at this area with sufficient rapidity. No matter how much money may be required for constructing the proposed underground system, w thin reason, of course, such expenditure would more than pay for itself by increasing the valuation of real estate, which forms the basis of tax returns. There is no danger that the city, in lending its credit to the underground proposition, would violate the provision of the Constitution regarding the debt limit. There would come almost immediately such an increase in the land values as would not alone compensate for the expenditure necessary for construction, but would leave a very large margin besides. It is my belief that the increase in the value of the lands that lie along the parks acquired by the city in the upper part of New York would alone furnish an adequate return on the investment for rapid transit. Nothing is needed to develop these lands except means of communication that would carry the people out there in a decently short time.

A Paying Investment.

It was in 1889 that the city secured these park areas. They cost $9,000,000. Now th s same property is worth over $100,000,000, leaving a profit of $90,000,000 in intrinsic value besides the great profit to the health and comfort of the people, which cannot be measured in dollars.

I am speaking now of Bronx Park, Van Cortlandt Park, Pelham Bay Park, St. Mary's Park, which lies east of St. Ann's avenue, Ce[illegible]k and Claremont Park.

Comparatively few people in the lower part of the city have any idea of the tremendous improvements that have been carried on in the northern section, nor have they any idea of the general advantages that have been reaped from these improvements by increasing land values, thus producing a consequent source of additional taxation. It must be our policy to continue these improvements; not to be frightened by the apparent present cost, but to consider future results. One of the great improvements now under way, and one that will do as much as anything else to help all classes of citizens, is the building of the viaduct connecting Riverside Drive with the Boulevard Lafayette and Dykeman street and the Speedway, crossing Manhattan Valley at One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street, and giving us a complete system of drives from Central Park nearly to the city line.

In the line of prepar.ng New York for its manifest destiny as the greatest city in the civilized world perhaps the most important improvement is the construction of a series of bridges spanning the Hudson and the Harlem.

It is not sufficient that we should connect Manhattan and the Bronx and Manhattan and Brooklyn with additional bridges; we should go further and arrange for the building of a bridge that would connect Queens and the Bronx. Such a bridge would transform hundreds of acres now used as farm lands into building lots. It is absurd to make travellers from Queens to the Bronx, or from the Bronx to Queens, make the long circuit by way of Manhattan Island. They should have easy means of intercommunication.

A bridge could be built, say in the vic nity of College Po nt or Flushing, on the Long Island side, to the opposite shore, with an abutment resting on one of the islands that dot the Sound—such as North Brother Island, City Island or Riker's Island.

Build More Bridges.

In 1873 and 1874 the Street Cleaning Department created sixty acres of new land on Riker's Island by filling in with street sweepings. This area could easily be increased to two hundred acres by the same process. I think, with an abutment of the Queens-Bronx bridge resting there and facilities provided for reaching the roadway of this bridge by means of elevators, all this filled in land now lying waste and useless would be utilized.

While on the subject of bridges I should like to point out that the time has come when we ought to utilize High Bridge for traffic. This structure was built for the purpose of carrying the water pipes of the old aqueduct system into the city. Foot passengers have always been allowed, but no wheel traffic has been permitted, because it was figured that the water pipes imposed a sufficient strain on the bridge. Now that we have the new aqueduct, capable of bringing 350,000,000 gallons of water to the city every day, there is no longer need of using the High Bridge pipes, which can deliver only 95,000,000 gallons. The city might well, therefore, use High Bridge as an avenue for carrying the volume of traffic in the upper part of the city, grading the streets to meet the grade of the High Bridge roadway.

These are only a portion of the improvements that a well directed, intelligent and efficient administration of municipal affairs would in time accomplish.

To Make New York Beautiful

By Gen. L. P. Di Cesnola, *Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

IT will probably be a century or more before New York takes rank as one of the beautiful cities of the world.

Our industrial progress has been so rapid, our opportunities for making money so great, that, like all new nations, we have been wrapped up in the material, paying little or no attention to the artistic. We have built our houses, laid out our streets, devised our pleasure grounds wholly with an eye to the utilitarian. Now, however, we have reached that stage where we demand something in addition to mere comfort. Our art sense, a sense that lies dormant in the breast of every human being, is manifesting itself on many sides. We have reached that period in the life of the nation where our material welfare is assured. We have a breathing spell. There is an end to all question of our financial success and stability, and we are doing as a community what the individual does when, having gained riches, he permits his inherent love of the aesthetic to take that place in his daily life which his past struggles have made impossible.

It is only within the past fifteen years or so that this spirit has really manifested itself, and with each succeeding year it is growing stronger. You can see its development on every hand. We are no longer satisfied with the hideous brownstone residence structures that for generations have been deemed perfectly satisfactory to New Yorkers. There has come within that period a complete change in our architecture, one of the very first symptoms in the art regeneration of the people. Instead of building our residences in flat, hideous, box-like brown rows, we are now going in for beautiful houses of marble and white stone. It is not a renaissance, but a new birth. In a few years, comparatively, it will transform our city from a gloomy pile of brown stone into a bright, white, light, airy and beautiful city. Nothing else is so important to the aesthetic improvement of this city as this new architecture, and if it is carried out for the next twenty-five or fifty years we will have made great strides in the direction of creating a city that is not alone first in the commercial life of the world, but in art as well. There is only one danger, and that is that we may overdo it. With true American impulsiveness we are going from one extreme to the other. From having no ornamentation at all on our house fronts we are loading our newest structures to the very eaves with figures and carvings. Only the other day I noticed in one of the fine new houses that are going up near Central Park that at the very top of the chimney the architect had set a whole row of sculptured bas-reliefs.

Artistic Homes.

To aid in bringing about the beautification of the city New York should have a system of museums and libraries. I think I am safe in saying that our museums in Central Park have had as much to do as anything else in educating the people away from contentment with inartistic surroundings. What we want now more than anything else to keep up this work is the creation of similar museums in various parts of the city.

In line with this idea would come the natural beautifying of the city through the erection of suitable buildings to house these various branch collections. It is in respect to public buildings, monumental buildings, that New York is lamentably weak.

We are just beginning to have here a few imposing monumental structures. It is the comparative abundance of such structures in the great European cities that gives them their very imposing character.

We are now building on our ground in Central Park an addition to the Metropolitan Museum of Art that illustrates the class of buildings of which I speak. Our new building will stand as a monument for many generations. It will add vastly to the tone and character of Fifth avenue.

Libraries and Museums.

The proposed library at Forty-second street and Fifth avenue is another such structure; the Columbia College group, the Proposed Cathedral on Morningside Heights and the Museum of Natural History are others.

Small parks, too, should be more numerous. These breathing spots, with plenty of flowers in the Spring and Summer and Autumn, should abound. They bring mental and physical vigor, and add to the beauty of the city a hundredfold. Almost involuntarily the character of the buildings surrounding these parks is improved. Let any one who doubts this compare the buildings that have sprung up around the small parks cut out in recent years in such localities as Mulberry Bend.

While on the subject of parks I should like to point out one reform which, if carried out, will do as much as almost anything else in improving the aesthetic appearance of the city and in elevating the sense of the people. This reform is the weeding out of our park statues. There ought to be a wholesale cleaning. In every park in the city where we have statues examples of outrageous productions will be found. They ought to come down at once. We had practically the same state of affairs at the Museum. We had an accumulation of bad work, which at the time it was accepted was the best obtainable. As we secured better examples these old-timers were packed away in the basement, and there they will remain, at least while the present authorities are in control. Everything ought to be done to increase our supply of good statuary and strong monuments in every part of the city. Paris has a column or a fine statue in almost every square, and Paris is to-day the most beautiful city on earth. Her prosperity and progress are due principally to this fact. They have found that art pays, even in the material sense. All good citizens ought to encourage the placing of statuary and monuments, and the city should see to it that only works of a high standard are accepted, for it is far harder to get rid of a bad example than it is to secure a good new example.

Statuary in the Parks.

There should also be a very keen supervision by the authorities of new public buildings and public works to make sure that they are artistic as well as useful. New York will never be the great city it should until it has a multitude of bridges spanning the rivers that surround Manhattan Island. These bridges will come as surely as new paved streets have come. When they do, let them be ornate as well as useful; let each one be a monument of beauty as well as a monument of commerce.